

THE PLAGUE IN HONGKONG.

The persistent complaints made by the Chinese against the soldiers in the visiting parties appear to be causing so much regrettable friction that we have taken some trouble investigating some of them, as the proper course for threatening the matter out—the institution of legal proceedings—has for some reason not been attempted by any of the parties who claim to be aggrieved.

One story related in a very indignant manner by a gentleman of high standing was that the soldiers last Wednesday night went into a certain Chinese house and threatened to cause considerable inconvenience to the inmates (by virtue of the special powers created for dealing with the plague) if bribes were not at once forthcoming. This is a fair sample of many such accusations, repeated all over the Colony, until the soldiers are regarded as monsters and the regime of the Permanent Committee a reign of terror.

This particular case we took up, and found that it emanated from House No. 52, Queen's Road West; and on inquiries being made there, it was discovered that the allegation had no reference to anything recent at all, but to events said to have occurred a month or six weeks ago. Several other attempts to elicit information as to any misconduct that had just taken place were equally unsuccessful, so that there was nothing left but the difficult task of tracing and substantiating or refuting ancient traditions.

On the first floor of No. 52, Queen's Road West, is a Chinese grant-in-aid school, conducted by a native teacher from the Berlin Foundling House. The room is, as usual in Chinese houses, about fifteen feet wide and fifty or sixty feet deep from the street. At the back is the kitchen, which smells abominably; in fact, the atmosphere of the whole room is pestilential, and quite unbearable to any but Chinese. The back part is pitch dark, and there are three partitions forming cubicles, six feet high with a clear space of five feet above. The teacher states that when the plague first broke out, there was only one partition, and the rear of the room was let to a tailor, only the front being used as a school; a soldier came one day (exact date not ascertainable) and said the partition must be taken down; the teacher urged him to let it remain, and the soldier said 'All right, if you give me some money.' So the teacher paid seventy cents, and was left in peace for a day or two. Then other soldiers came and demanded money in the same way; but the teacher refused to disgorge, saying that this was a Government grant-in-aid school and he would appeal to the Government through the Education Department; the partition was quite new, having only been put up in February, so that it could not be filthy. Then the soldiers destroyed the partition, made a mess with whitewash, and upset the house generally. Since then the tailor has gone away, and new partitions have been put up. The visits were repeated every few days, but there was never any plague in the house. There are now no children going to the school, but the teacher is waiting in the assurance that they will all come back when the trouble is over.

Now, it is easy enough to say vaguely that on some date not specified, some unidentified soldiers came and got money. It is, in fact, far too easy. The author of the accusation made no attempt to give the charge home or to fix the alleged offence on any individual; never complained to the police, nor asked the name of the soldier, nor even made a note of the time so as to trace the man. It is therefore practically impossible at this date to say whether the man was a blackmailer or the other a liar—for one of the two conclusions is inevitable. But the fact remains that the place is distinctly unfit for human habitation; even the teacher's pastor and protector, the Rev. R. F. Gottschalk, admits that it is abominably unhealthy, so that there is here, as in many hundreds of other Chinese buildings, pressing need for extensive measures which cannot but cause inconvenience to the occupants. Pulling down partitions is a slight step in the right direction, but only slight. There may possibly be men at this sanitary work who would accept bribes (though not a single case has been proved, out of scores of vague allegations), but if there is any squeezing, if any Chinaman does part with his money, the more fool he. The work has to be done; why do not the Chinese realise that, and cease all this nonsense?

Let them accept the inevitable, and cooperate or at least stop struggling, stop offering bribes, and there is an end of the trouble. Whatever they do, they cannot avoid having their filthy places cleaned, and the sooner they give up hoping to evade it, the better. On the other hand, any misconduct on the part of the soldiers should be promptly reported to the police. A man who makes slanderous accusations without thus substantiating them can only be regarded as a mischief-maker.

There have been many cases of Chinese taking the soldiers to court for bribes. The officers several times caught the Chinese in the act, and have taken the law into their own hands summarily and taught the offenders a lesson through the shoe-lace method. It would, however, be only natural (since there is human nature in soldiers) that the idea of getting money might enter the heads of some of the men; but there could be no 'squeezing' if the

Chinese had sense enough to act like rational creatures. If they still continue to be so silly, nobody can be hurt but themselves. But for the present, there is no evidence of any truth in the Chinese stories about soldiers extorting money.

The following are the statistics of the Hongkong Hospitals for the twenty-four hours to noon to-day:

	English	Chinese	Portuguese	Other	Total
Admissions	10	10	10	10	40
Discharges	10	10	10	10	40
Under Treatment	10	10	10	10	40

THE CRISIS IN COREA.

WAR DECLARED BETWEEN CHINA AND JAPAN. DECLARATION OF CHINESE TRANSPORTS ATTACKED.

(SPECIAL TO THE 'CHINA MAIL').

Shanghai, 26th July.

War declared yesterday; Zouan sunk, Tsoo-kiang seized, Koushing damaged.

Mr. A. G. Marshall, manager of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, received a telegram from the Bank's manager at Shanghai this morning intimating that war has been declared between China and Japan.

The Zouan is described in Lloyd's Register as an iron steam tug of 1901 tons gross, 1232 net, built in 1881 by Palmer & Co., of Newcastle-on-Tyne. She was formerly called the *Rory*, and later the *Heman*, before being bought by the China Merchants Co. She has engines of 180 indicated horse power, and her usual speed was nine knots. She had not been to Hongkong for some months, but it is believed that the Europeans on board were—J. P. Lowe, Captain; F. Stack, Chief Officer; J. Stevens, Second Officer; W. Urtwin, Chief Engineer; J. Brown, Second, and W. H. Stewart, Third.

The *Koushing*, Capt. Galsworthy, belongs to the Indo-China Co., and was until lately on the Manila run.

The *Tsoo-kiang* is supposed to be an old composite transport of about 600 tons; but her name does not appear among the rest of the Chinese Navy given in Lloyd's. She was apparently used as a despatch vessel.

A telegram was received in Hongkong to-day announcing that the export of rice from the Yangtze grain ports was to be prohibited by the Chinese Government, in case of emergencies.

The insurance, shipping, and other firms in Hongkong have no news confirming the reported disasters; but in a case of this kind there will necessarily be many important events that cannot be officially corroborated until days or weeks afterwards.

Captain Rowley of the steamer *Sika*, which arrived from Tacoma to-day, reports that on Wednesday, 25th inst., at 6.30 a.m., while on the voyage from Kobe to Hongkong, he passed a fleet of Japanese men-of-war, drawn up in four divisions of five vessels each, making, apparently, for Korea. Their guns were run out, nettles up, and they had every appearance of having been put into fighting trim. It is extremely likely this was the fleet which wrought havoc with the Chinese transports.

The *Shanghai Mercury* of the 21st inst. contains the following:—Our latest news received from Peking to-day, is that war between China and Japan is almost certain, the latest telegram from Tientsin stating that 3,000 more troops were being dispatched to Korea. It is beyond doubt that news from the Japanese capital to that direction, for we learn that at one time it was doubtful if the *Yokio Maru* would proceed this afternoon to Japan, and from what we could gather on board the steamer, it was thought extremely likely she would, after all, have to remain at Yokohama for definite orders. Rumour had it to-day that war was actually declared between the two countries, but we have made enquiries from those who ought to know, and have been informed that, up to the present, no hostilities have taken place in Korea, but that the sides are making active preparations for war. The coal market in Nagasaki is reported to be in an unusual state of excitement to-day, and there is considerable quiet inquiry as to steamers for charter.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE TAIPIINGSHAN DISTRICT.

To the Editor of the 'CHINA MAIL'.

Hongkong, July 27.

Sir—As I understand that the Bill to be introduced with reference to the restriction of the plague district is now being circulated, might I suggest that the publication of it in the local papers would be a useful measure considering the large number of interests affected?—Yours,

X.

Dr. Albright, who has gained fame in Java by the discovery of a likely remedy for leprosy, recently read a paper on the subject before a gathering of fellow physicians at Batavia. He comes to the conclusion that leprosy is a chronic infectious disease without hereditary characteristics but with a time of incubation lasting from 5 to 6 years. In Netherlands India, it is most prevalent in the island of Madura and in S. E. Borneo. The people there only begin to isolate lepers when the disease has reached an advanced stage, and then only in houses standing apart outside the village. In Java and Madura, leprosy has not increased greatly, and Dr. Albright recommends dealing with the lepers by isolation and regular medical treatment in hospitals. He has, experimentally with different medicines on leper patients, and has found no cure for the disease yet, but is now using a remedy which has wrought alleviation and improvement on several lepers. Dr. Albright does not think the results striking enough yet to speak more fully of the methods resorted to. He has found what may prove to be the leprosy bacillus, but admits he may be mistaken. Experiments with this bacillus on kittens are going on. Dr. Albright exhibited two patients who were undergoing his treatment and who showed evident signs of the disease abating.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON HONGKONG BROTHELS.

ABOLITION OF REGISTRATION ORDERED.

On the 24th inst. we stated that a despatch had been received from the Marquis of Ripon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, ordering the abolition of the registration of brothels in Hongkong, and we also stated that an Ordinance would be introduced at the next meeting of the Legislative Council giving effect to the peremptory instructions from home. We are now able to give the principal despatches on the subject—

THE MARQUIS OF RIPON TO SIR WM. ROBINSON.

Downing Street, 17th March, 1893.

Sir—With reference to my predecessor's despatch of 2nd July, 1887, relative to the repeal of those parts of the Contagious Diseases Ordinance that in force in Hongkong, which provided for the compulsory examination of women and the retention of the provisions contained in those Ordinances for the registration and supervision of brothels, I have the honour to inform you that I am of opinion that this system of registration and inspection of brothels should no longer be maintained.

2.—The system is clearly contrary to the recognised policy of Parliament, and I am not satisfied that it has much, if any, effect towards the prevention of the kidnapping of girls and brothel-keeping, the only objects which, if registered, brothels are intended to achieve. The system is also a source of annoyance to the community, and it is not possible to enforce the provisions of the Ordinance in a satisfactory manner. I therefore propose that the system of registration and inspection of brothels should be discontinued.

3.—I desire, therefore, that you will take steps as soon as possible for the preparation of an Ordinance abolishing this system. It will be necessary to repeal section 21 of the Ordinance No. 11 of 1880, to repeal all references in other sections of that Ordinance to the system, which is 'unregistered' brothels. There will perhaps be other consequential amendments, which may, in your opinion, be desirable to make, with a view to securing under the altered circumstances the fullest possible benefit from the other provisions of that Ordinance which have for their object the protection of women and girls, and which will I trust be at least as effectual as they are at present, even when the registration of brothels is abolished. I should be glad if you will submit the draft of the Ordinance to me before introducing it.

4.—I take this opportunity of asking you to furnish me with a report upon the case of the suicide of an inmate of a brothel, referred to in the leading article in the *Hongkong Daily Press* of 4th October last. I have not seen any report of the inquest held in this case, and I am anxious to know as stated in the above-mentioned paper, it would seem to prove that it is not generally understood in the Colony that a brothel-keeper has no legal right to demand any redemption money for the release of one of the inmates, but, on the other hand, is liable to a penalty of imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, if she detains any inmate of the brothel against her will (section 8, of Ordinance No. 11 of 1880). If this had been understood in the present case, a prosecution might have been instituted on the ground of extortion, and a single successful prosecution in a case of this kind would, in all probability, do more to show that the inmates of brothels are absolutely free to leave such places when they wish, than could ever be effected by the present system, under which efforts are induced to explain the positions to the inmates of brothels, but such efforts must to some extent be nullified by the fact that the brothels are registered, so that in the eyes at least of the unfortunate inmates the brothel-keepers must appear to be licensed by the Government.

5.—I desire to add that it would appear from the Colonial Surgeon's report for 1891, which was forwarded in your despatch of 7th November last, that no steps have at present been taken to carry out the instructions given in my predecessor's despatch of 2nd July, 1887, to the effect that the registration of brothels should be discontinued, and that the inmates of brothels should be gradually made to understand that they should not come up for examination periodically, but should only attend for that purpose when they have contracted, or fear that they may have contracted, the disease. I am unable to admit that the registration of brothels, should be discontinued, and that the inmates of brothels should be gradually made to understand that they should not come up for examination periodically, but should only attend for that purpose when they have contracted, or fear that they may have contracted, the disease. 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